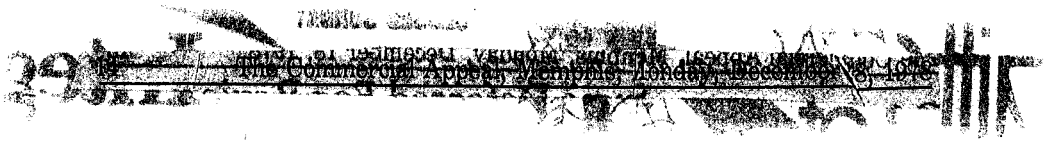
No Proof:



Assassinations Panel Finds Only Hints Of Conspiracies

By JIM ADAMS

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a $5.8-million investigation, the House Assassinations Committee is considering a conclusion that conspiracies can neither be proved nor ruled out in the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), chairman, says he thinks the committee has painted publicly "the outlines of a conspiracy" involving a $50,000 St. Louis bounty for King's assassination.

But Stokes acknowledged the committee has no proof of such a conspiracy behind King's murder in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

At the same time, a 500-page staff draft summary reportedly says there is no evidence of any specific conspiracy in Kennedy's assassination in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963, but all possibilities have not been ruled out.

The draft report says, for example, that old evidence of organized crime links to the killing has not been proved or disproved although "there is no direct evidence" of an organized crime conspiracy.

The committee also has suggested publicly that conspiracy in Kennedy's assassination cannot be ruled out without testing a recently surfaced piece of film to see if it shows conspirators.

Robert L. Groden, a New Jersey photo technician, says his study of the film shows clear movement by more than one shape at the windows from which Lee Harvey Oswald is accused of killing Kennedy with a high-powered rifle.

The committee is to vote on final conclusions this week. One proposed recommendation is that the Justice Department investigate the film and the committee's undisclosed conspiracy leads.

The most impressive testimony was scientific evidence supporting the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman in Kennedy's assassination.

Teams of experts assembled by the committee agreed that all three shots at Kennedy's limousine in Dealey Plaza were fired from Oswald's rifle from a sixth floor window.

They agreed one shot missed, one went through the president's throat and into John Connally and the third exploded in Kennedy's skull.

The only contrary evidence was a sound on a tape recording of a motorcycle policeman's radio. An expert said it has a 50-50 statistical chance of being a pistol shot fired by someone else.

The committee demolished James Earl Ray's alibi that he was blocks away in a service station when King was shot. The only purported witness to that story admitted it was a hoax.

The committee also presented evidence, as Stokes put it, that Ray stalked King to Selma and Atlanta before the assassination.

But the panels of experts, including ballistics experts, were unable to find physical evidence that Ray fired the shots that killed King.

Ray pleaded guilty to the assassination and is serving a 99-year prison sentence, but now says he was framed.

His fingerprints were on the rifle found near the scene but he says he had turned the gun over to a man he knew only as Raoul for what he thought was a gunrunning operation.

The evidence was murkiest on possible conspiracies, although more substantial on King's assassination than Kennedy's.

A St. Louis man, Russell George Byers, swore under oath that he rejected a $50,000 offer from a prominent lawyer, John H. Sutherland, now dead, "to kill or arrange the murder of Martin Luther King."

Byers said Sutherland made the offer in an old house decorated with Confederate flags about a year before King's assassination and said the money would be raised by a secret southern organization.

But committee investigators said a probe uncovered no evidence that Ray knew about the alleged bounty and killed King for it.

If he did, the investigators reported, an analysis of Ray's finances indicates he never got the $50,000 or any other large payment.

The investigators said there is circumstantial evidence that Ray's brothers helped him rob an Alton, Ill., bank of $26,000.

They also said they have information that the brothers might have been involved some way in an assassination conspiracy.

The brothers, Jerry and John, denied both allegations under oath.

In the Kennedy assassination, chief counsel G. Robert Blakey told the committee that although no organized crime conspiracy had been established, "the possibility cannot be dismissed."

Several committee members say the draft final report says the possibility still cannot be dismissed.

One member said the draft cites testimony by reliable Clinton, La., residents that Oswald traveled there several months before Kennedy's assassination with David Ferrie, who worked for reputed New Orleans mobster Carlos Marcello.